for Prohibition and Drug Abuse Prevention. Under this Scheme the Ministry is giving financial assistance to Voluntary Organisations for setting up of Drug Awareness Counselling Assistance Centres and Drug De-addiction-cum-Rehabilitation Centres, Organising De-addiction Camps and for Awareness Generation Programmes.

As a result of this Ministry's efforts, the number of Centres have increased from 7 in 1985-86 to 363 as on 31.3.96 of which 130 Centres are De-addiction-cum-Rehabilitation Centres and 233 are Counselling Centres.

The Ministry will continue to work for drug demand reduction programmes with greater emphasis on awareness generation, preventive education as well as rehabilitation and social re-integration of the drug addicts.

**Patent related services in research and development activities**

3446. SHRI N. THALAVAI SUNDARAM: Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Government have decided to provide patent related services free of cost for innovations resulting in research and development activities;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) whether Government have taken special steps to collect indigenous knowledge on herbs in order to prevent foreign countries from patenting them?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) and (b) The Patent Office through its libraries and inspection centres provide certain patent related services to general public free of cost, such as guidance to inventors to conduct search as well as filing of patent applications.

(c) Herbs as such are not patentable under the provisions of the Patents Act, 1970. The Botanical Survey of India is responsible for survey and inventorisation of plants in the country. It has so far surveyed 70% of the geographical area of the country and has identified 45,000 plant species.

**Balance money under EPF and ESI Schemes**

3447. SHRI PARMESHWAR KUMAR AGARWALLA: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) the balance of money at the end of each financial year during the last three years under the Employees Provident Fund and Employees State Insurance Schemes, respectively;

(b) what has been the use made of these amounts separately;

(c) whether any amount of EPF and ESI has been advanced to some Institutions;

(d) if so, the rate of interest and the total amount collected as a result thereof; and

(e) the rate of interest being paid to the employees credit and how much is the difference between the total amount of interest collected from Institutions and interest paid to the employees in respect of both EPF and ESI?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI M. ARUNACHALAM): (a) The requisite information is as given below:—

(Rs. in Crores)

| | 1993-94 | 1994-95 | 1995-96 |
|---|---|---|---|
| EPF Balance | 20289.37 | 23570.41 | 27483.13 (Provisional) |
| ESI Balance | 2118.19 | 2384.53 | 2682.50 |

(b) to (c) The EPF contributions collected but not immediately needed for payment are required to be invested in accordance with the pattern prescribed by the Ministry of Finance from time to time. Under the present pattern 40% of the investible surplus is to be invested in the Central/State Government securities, 30% in the Special Deposit Scheme of the Central Government and the remaining 30% in the banks and other public financial institutions/companies. Similarly the investible surplus of the ESI fund is being invested as per the rules and instructions of the Ministry of Finance issued from time to time. According to the ESIC an amount of Rs. 2395.40 crore has been invested in the Special Deposit account of the Central Government, Rs. 267.10 crore in the Nationalised Banks and Rs. 20 crore in the IFCI. The EPF subscribers are being paid 12% interest on their monthly running PF balance as against annual average yield of 11.91% on all investments during 1995-96.

**Initiatives to remove infrastructural Bottlenecks**

3448. SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND: DR. RANBIR SINGH:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to take several initiatives to remove infrastructural bottlenecks for export and ease credit availability to exporters to give an export push;

(b) if so, details thereof with background;

(c) whether some objectives are likely to be achieved with these initiatives;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH): (a) to (e) Government is engaged in the continuous upgradation of export infrastructure. The Ministry of Commerce acts in co-ordination with the other Ministries, Departments and agencies for the purpose. Standing Committees on Promotion of Exports (SCOPE) in respect of air cargo (SCOPE-AIR) and sea borne cargo (SCOPE-SHIPPING) are functioning in the Ministry. These help to resolve constraints encountered in export transportation and to advise on long term strengthening of infrastructure. The Ministry of Surface Transport is upgrading the port infrastructure. Inland Container Depots (ICDs) and Container Freight Station (CFSs) are being established in various parts of the country to facilitate container transportation of goods and intermodal conveyance. An Inter-Ministerial Committee accords single-window clearance for establishing these ICDs and CFSs. An Open Sky Policy has been adopted to permit uninterrupted clearance of air cargo. Private initiative is being harnessed in creating infrastructure at ports, airports, in upgrading highways and in setting up of ICDs/CFSs, warehouses, etc.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) arranges for and monitors the flow of export credit in rupees and in foreign currency. The schemes in force include:—

(i) Pre-shipment Export Credit in Foreign Currency (PCFC),

(ii) Pre-shipment Export Credit in Rupee.

(iii) Post-shipment Export Credit in Rupees, and

(iv) Export Bill Rediscounting (EBR).

As a result of various measures taken by the Government to boost exports, a growth rate of 20.9% was achieved during 1995-96.

**Manufacture of Low Cost Car**

3449. SHRI G. PRATHAPA REDDY: Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether a leading Japanee automobile company is planning to manufacture a low cost asia car in India;